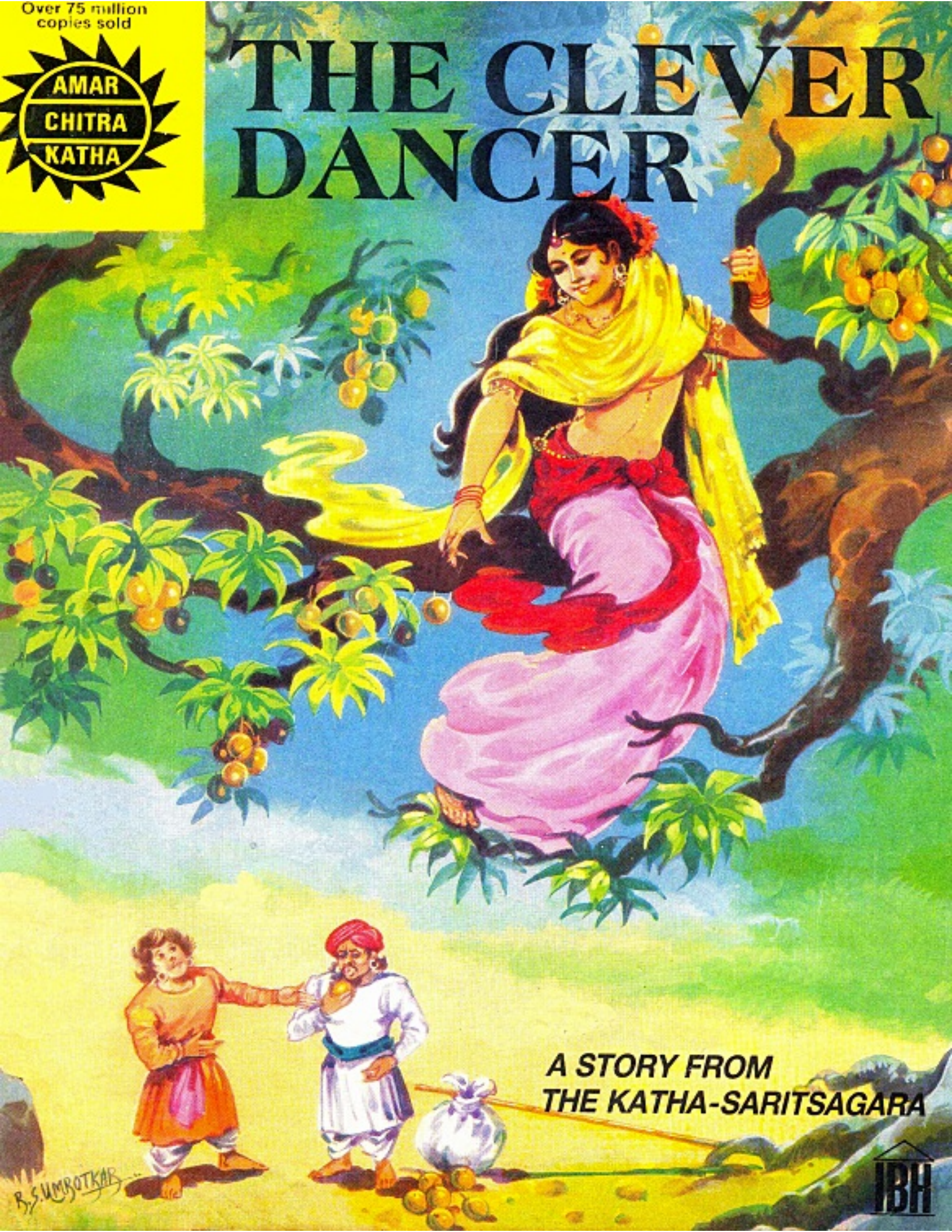


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THE KATHA-SARITSAGARA

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THE CLEVER DANCER



MULADEVA WAS A YOUNG BRAHMIN OF UJJAINI. HE WAS A MAN OF GREAT KNOWLEDGE AND INGENUITY. HE DEFEATED PUNDITS AND SCHOLARS IN DEBATES UPON THE SCRIPTURES, AND WAS CONSIDERED AN AUTHORITY ON THE VEDAS.

MULADEVA HAD A CLOSE FRIEND CALLED SHASHI. ONE DAY SHASHI CAME TO MULADEVA WITH A SUGGESTION.

YOU ARE A MASTER IN THE ART OF ORATORY AND YOUR FAME HAS TRAVELLED FAR AND WIDE. WHY NOT GO TO PATALIPUTRA AND EARN GREATER GLORY ?

A FINE SUGGESTION, FRIEND. AND I CAN TEST MY METTLE IN THAT HOME OF POLISHED WIT AND REFINEMENT.





ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE GREAT CITY, THEY SAW A WOMAN WASHING CLOTHES.



LET US ASK HER
IF SHE KNOWS OF SOME
PLACE WHERE
WE CAN STAY.

THAT IS
OUR FIRST AND
FOREMOST NEED.

THEY APPROACHED THE WOMAN.



GOOD LADY,
WHERE DO
TRAVELLERS FIND
LODGING ?

I KNOW THAT
DUCKS NEST ON
THE RIVER BANKS,
FISH IN THE WATER,
BEES IN LOTUSES;
BUT I HAVEN'T THE
FAINTEST IDEA
WHERE TRAVELLERS
STAY !

MULADEVA AND SHASHI WERE DUMBOUNDED.

WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

JUST WALK INTO THE CITY, FRIEND.

THEY HAD HARDLY GONE A FEW YARDS, WHEN THEY FOUND A BOY CRYING AT THE DOOR OF A HOUSE, WITH A PLATE OF WARM RICE-PUDDING IN FRONT OF HIM.

ONLY A FOOLISH CHILD WEeps WHEN SUCH DELICIOUS HOT FOOD IS BEFORE HIM.

I AGREE.

THE LITTLE BOY BURST OUT LAUGHING.

ONLY FOOLS WILL NOT UNDERSTAND WHY I CRY. I HAVE TO WAIT FOR THE PUDDING TO COOL BEFORE I CAN EAT IT; BY CRYING, MY THROAT IS CLEARED AND MY LUNGS GET EXERCISE. BUT COUNTRY BUMPKINS LIKE YOU CANNOT UNDERSTAND ALL THIS!

THE FRIENDS WERE SHOCKED AT HIS LANGUAGE.

SUCH WORDS FROM THE MOUTH OF A LITTLE BOY!

WHAT A PRECOCIOUS CHILD!

AS THEY WERE CROSSING A FOREST—

GIVE US
SOME MANGOES,
FAIR ONE.

HOT OR
COLD ?

THE FRIENDS EXCHANGED GLANCES.

ANSWER
THAT,
MULADEVA.

MULADEVA WAS READY WITH HIS REPLY.

SOME
WARM ONES
FIRST.

SHE THREW DOWN SOME MANGOES.



MULADEVA AND SHASHI PICKED UP THE FRUIT, AND BLEW THE DUST OFF THEM.



AFTER THEY HAD EATEN THOSE MANGOES —

WERE THEY TOO WARM? I NOTICED YOU BLEW ON THEM. THEY ARE QUITE COOL — YOU CAN SAVE YOUR BREATH.



BY NOW MULADEVA,
THE GREAT WIT, WAS
FEELING HUMBLER,
EVEN ASHAMED.

SHE IS THE
WITTIEST
CREATURE I'VE
MET. I'LL GET
THIS CLEVER
GIRL FOR A WIFE
AND TEACH
HER A
LESSON
OR TWO.



SHASHI, WE
MUST FIND OUT
WHERE SHE
LIVES.



THAT EVENING -

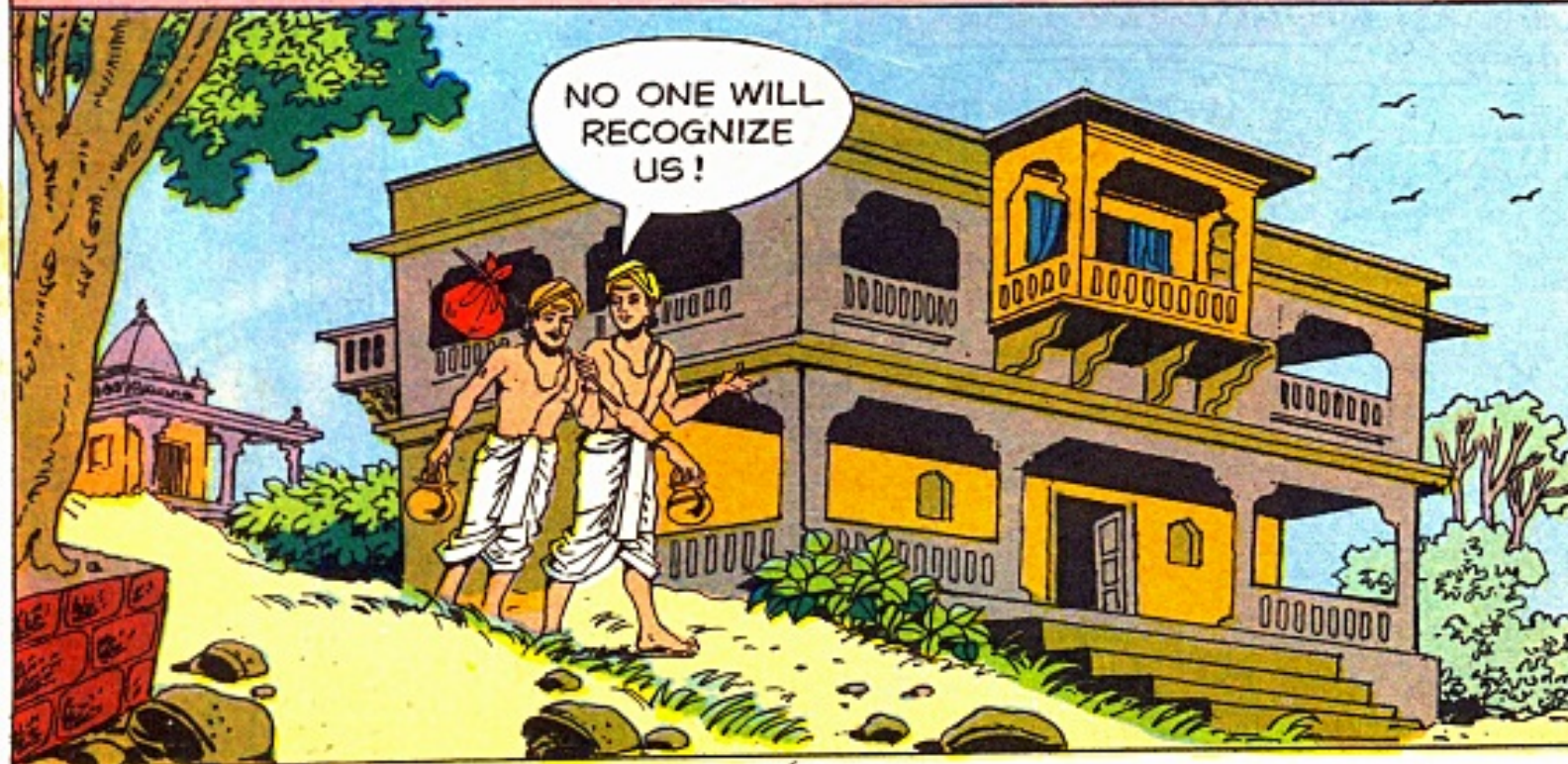
MULADEVA, SHE
IS THE DAUGHTER
OF A RICH
BRAHMIN NAMED
YAJNASWAMI.

WE
MUST ACT
PROMPTLY.



THE FOLLOWING DAY, MULADEVA AND SHASHI DISGUISED THEMSELVES AS
HUMBLE BRAHMINS AND STARTED OFF FOR YAJNASWAMI'S HOUSE.

NO ONE WILL
RECOGNIZE
US!



MULADEVA AND SHASHI FELT BOLD ENOUGH TO BARGAIN.

NOBLE SIR, WE CAN STAY WITH YOU ONLY ON ONE CONDITION. AFTER THE END OF FOUR MONTHS, YOU MUST GIVE US WHATEVER WE ASK FOR.

CERTAINLY, I WILL GIFT YOU ANYTHING THAT IS IN MY POWER TO GIVE.

MULADEVA AND SHASHI LIVED IN YAJNASWAMI'S HOUSE. THEY ENCOUNTERED YAJNASWAMI'S DAUGHTER A NUMBER OF TIMES BUT SHE DID NOT RECOGNISE THEM IN THEIR DISGUISE.

AS INNOCENT AS A FLOWER! BUT I CAN'T FORGET THAT SHE HAD THE BETTER OF ME!

AT THE END OF FOUR MONTHS -

WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND HOSPITALITY.

IT WAS A PLEASURE TO HAVE SUCH STIMULATING COMPANY.

SIR, BEFORE WE
TAKE YOUR LEAVE,
MAY I REMIND YOU
OF THE PROMISE
YOU MADE ME?

PLEASE
ASK FOR
WHATEVER
YOU WANT.

GIVE YOUR
DAUGHTER IN
MARRIAGE TO
MY FRIEND,
MULADEVA.

YAJNASWAMI WAS TAKEN BY SURPRISE.

HAVE THEY TRICKED ME?
NEVER MIND. THE
YOUNG MAN IS
LEARNED AND
QUITE ELIGIBLE,
BESIDES.

MOST
WILLINGLY.

YAJNASWAMI'S DAUGHTER AND MULADEVA WERE MARRIED.



ALONE IN THE BRIDAL CHAMBER -



DO YOU RECOGNISE ME? THOSE WARM AND COOL MANGOES...

SHE BROKE INTO A SMILE.



COUNTRY BUMPKINS ARE TOO SLOW FOR CITY WITS.

I, THE COUNTRY BUMPKIN, AM ABOUT TO DESERT YOU AND GO FAR AWAY. AND YOU, THE CITY WIT, WILL STAY HERE AND FRET!

MULADEVA'S WIFE SHOWED NO SIGN OF ALARM OR FEAR BUT INSTEAD, THREW HER HUSBAND A CHALLENGE.

YOU WILL COME BACK TO ME AS FATHER OF MY SON!

DEAR EXPERT AT REPORTEEE AND RIDDLE, LET US SEE HOW YOU DO THAT.

AFTER THESE EXCHANGES, THE TIRED PAIR WENT TO SLEEP.

IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT, MULADEVA GOT UP.

I SHALL SLIP THIS RING ON TO HER FINGER BEFORE I LEAVE HER.

MULADEVA MET SHASHI OUTSIDE THE HOUSE AS PLANNED AND TOGETHER THEY LEFT FOR UJJAINI.



THE NEXT DAY—

SO, MY GOOD HUSBAND WAS NOT JOKING. HE DID LEAVE.



SEEING THE RING ON HER FINGER—

HIS NAME IS ENGRAVED ON THIS RING— THE RENOWNED MULADEVA OF UJJAINI! I WILL GO THERE AND PROVE THAT I WAS NOT JOKING EITHER!



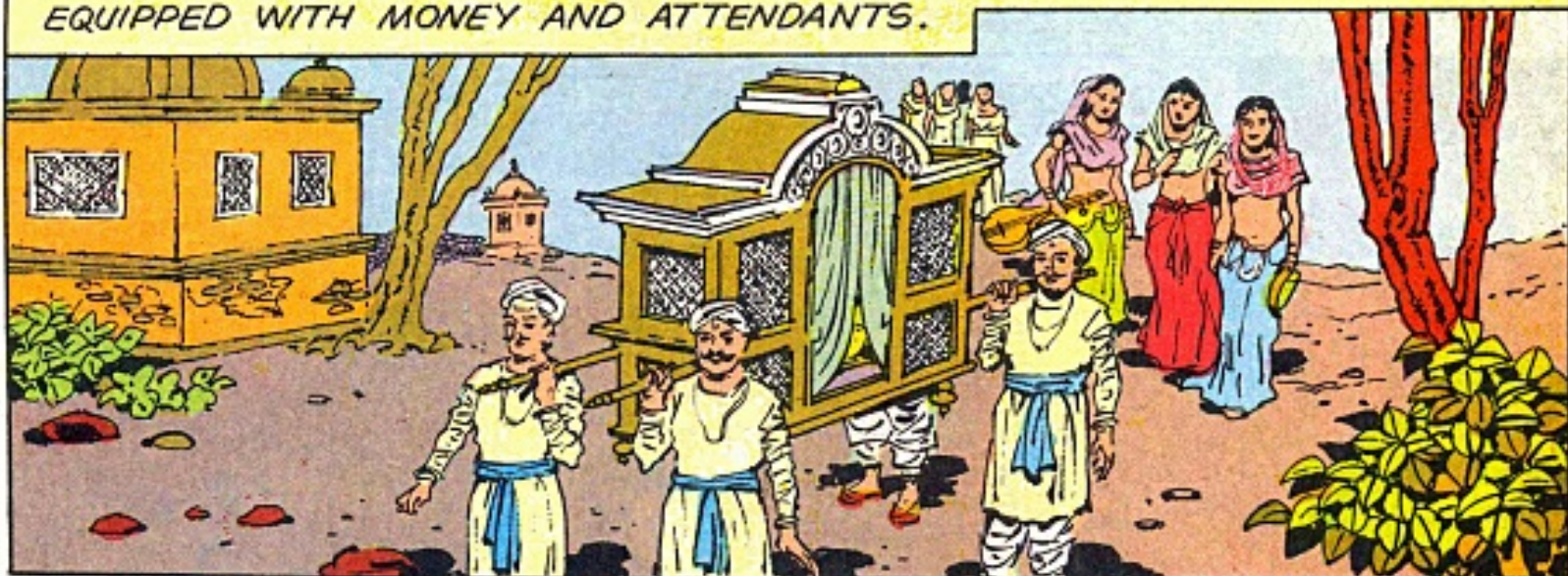
SHE WENT TO HER FATHER.

FATHER, MY HUSBAND HAS DESERTED ME. I WISH TO LEAVE ON A PILGRIMAGE.

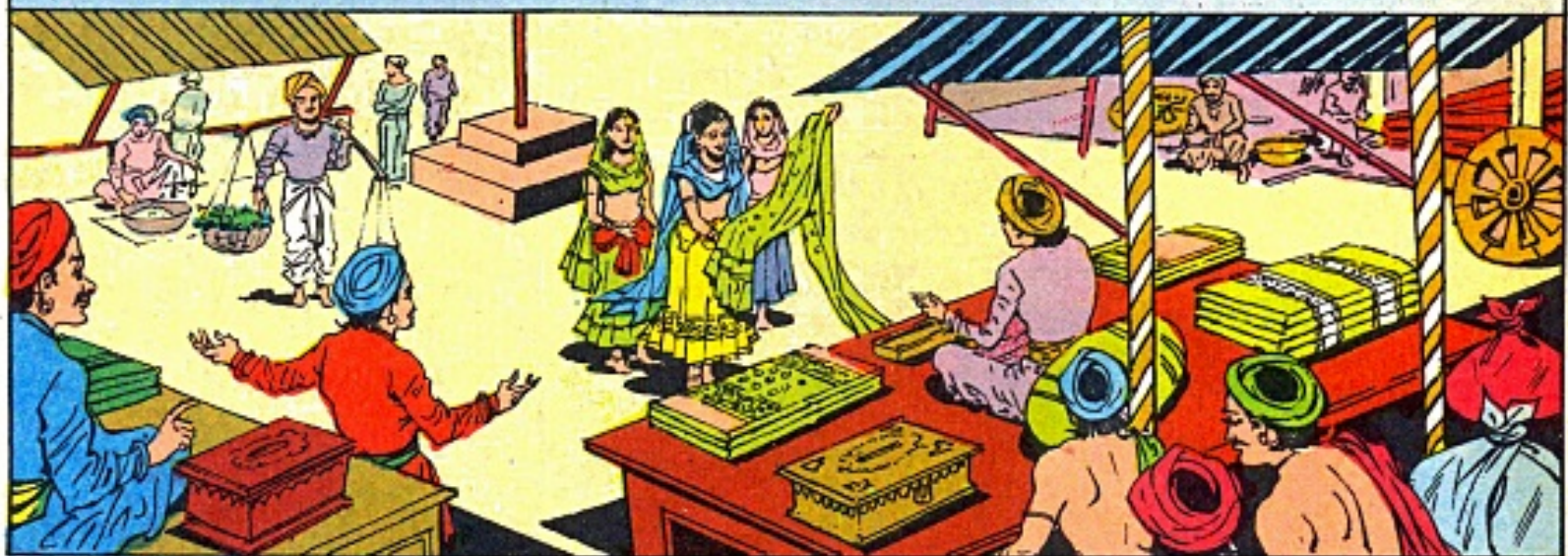
MY CHILD, I UNDERSTAND.



SHE TOOK PERMISSION FROM HER FATHER AND SET OUT FOR UJJAINI, EQUIPPED WITH MONEY AND ATTENDANTS.



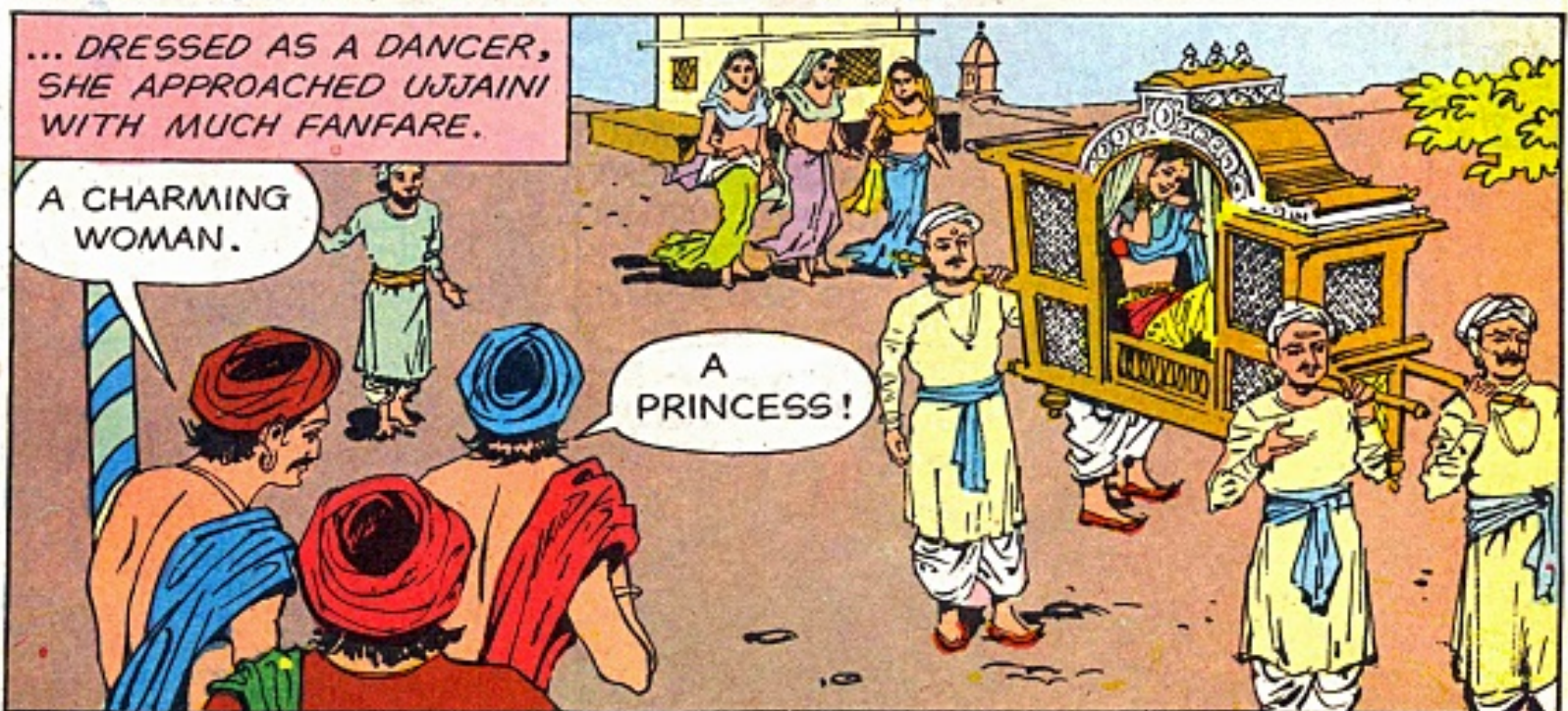
ON THE WAY SHE BOUGHT HERSELF A FINE COSTUME AND...



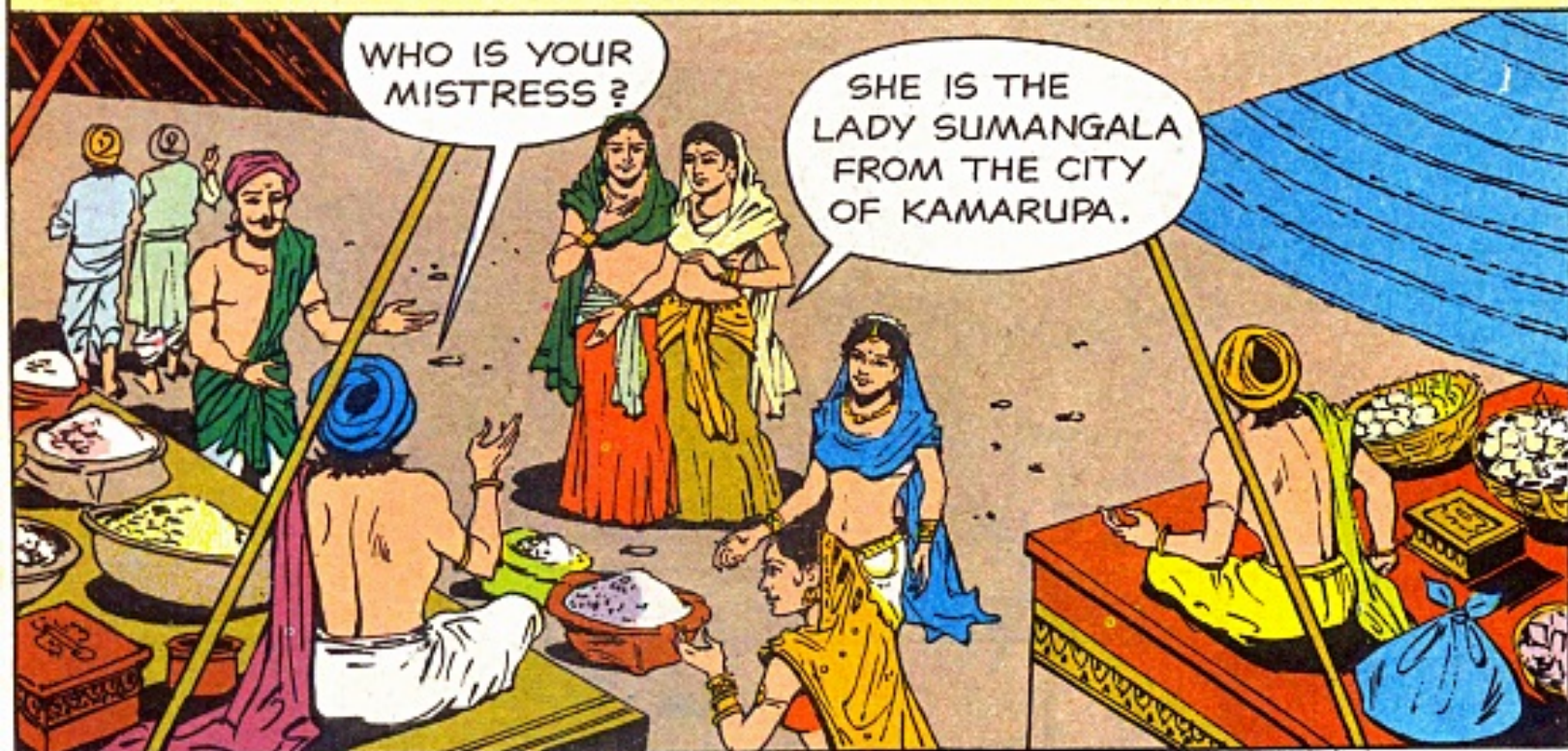
... DRESSED AS A DANCER, SHE APPROACHED UJJAINI WITH MUCH FANFARE.

A CHARMING WOMAN.

A PRINCESS!



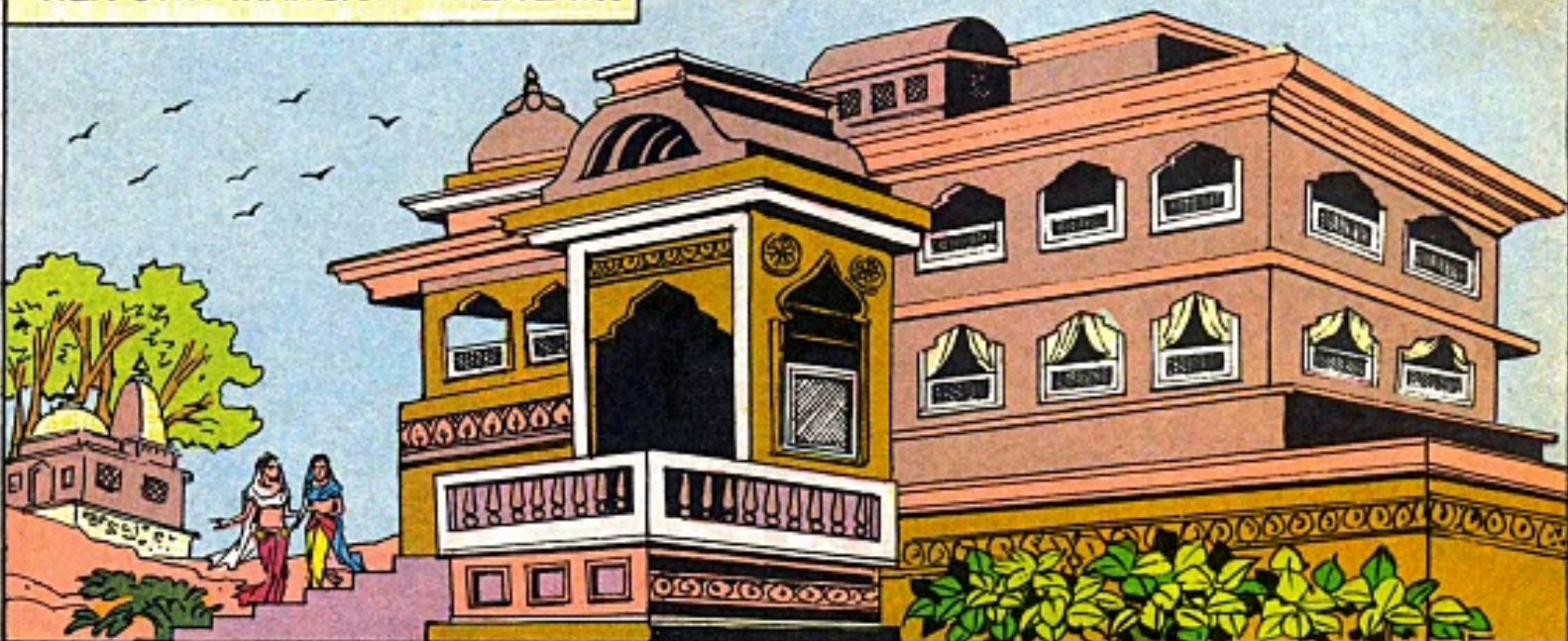
SHE CAMPED OUTSIDE THE CITY AND HER SERVANTS WENT ABOUT PROCLAIMING HER AS THE LOVELIEST WOMAN IN THE WORLD.



A DISTINGUISHED DANCER OF UJJAINI, NAMED DEVADATTA, APPROACHED SUMANGALA.



SUMANGALA ACCEPTED THE OFFER. DEVADATTA, GAVE SUMANGALA HER OWN MANSION TO LIVE IN.



NEWS ABOUT SUMANGALA'S CHARM AND BEAUTY REACHED SHASHI'S EARS.



SHASHI SENT A MESSENGER TO SUMANGALA.



THE MESSENGER RETURNED TO SHASHI.

I SHALL SEE HER THIS EVENING.

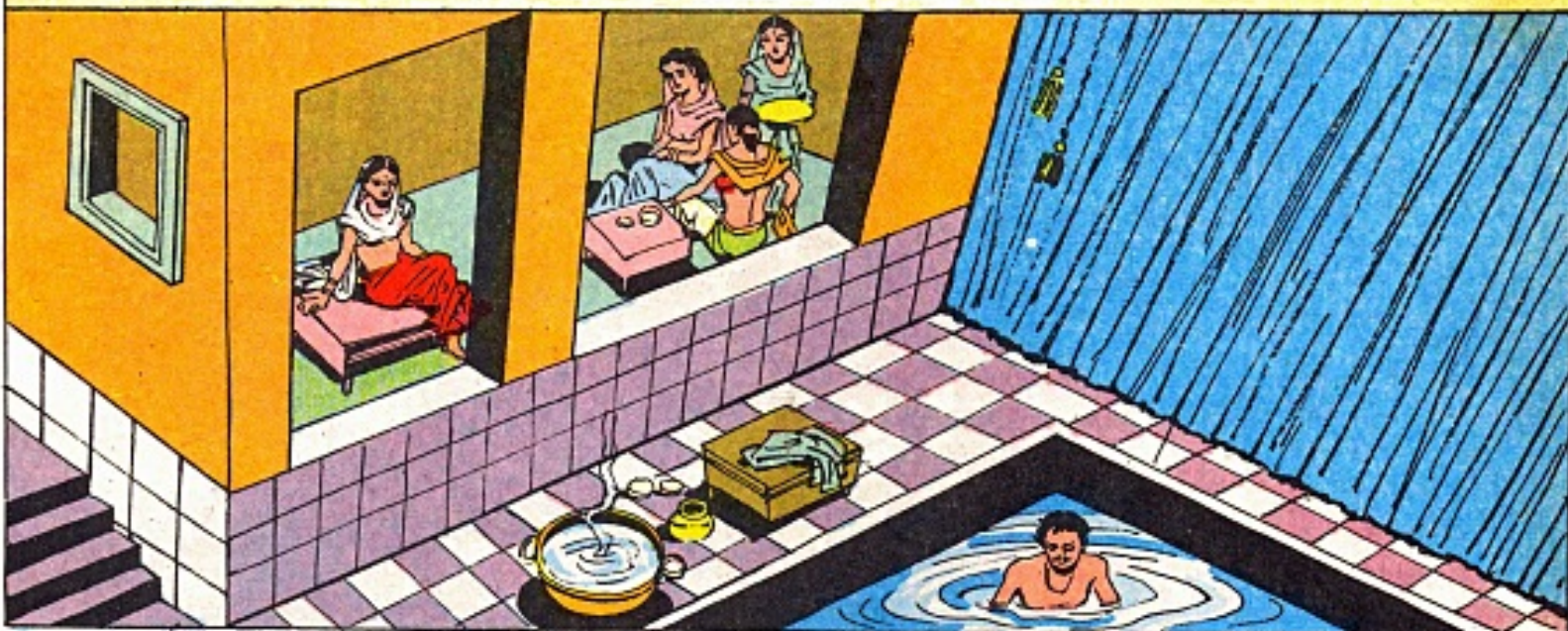
THAT NIGHT, SHASHI LEFT FOR HER PALACE, DRESSED IN FINE CLOTHES.

WHEN HE CAME TO THE FIRST ENTRANCE OF THE PALACE, THE DOORKEEPER STOPPED HIM.

SIR, YOU MAY HAVE HAD A BATH AT HOME, BUT TO ENTER, YOU MUST BATHE HERE ONCE AGAIN. ELSE YOU MAY NOT GO IN.

THE SURPRISED SHASHI AGREED AND WAS LED TO A TASTEFULLY DECORATED BATH.

FEMALE SERVANTS WAITED UPON HIM AND BY THE TIME HE FINISHED BATHING, THE FIRST WATCH OF THE NIGHT HAD PASSED.



SHASHI THEN ENTERED THE SECOND PORTAL OF THE PALACE.



SHASHI TURNED BACK AND WAS SOON ADORNED IN BEAUTIFUL GARMENTS BY SUMANGALA'S FEMALE SERVANTS. BY THIS TIME THE SECOND WATCH OF THE NIGHT HAD COME TO AN END.



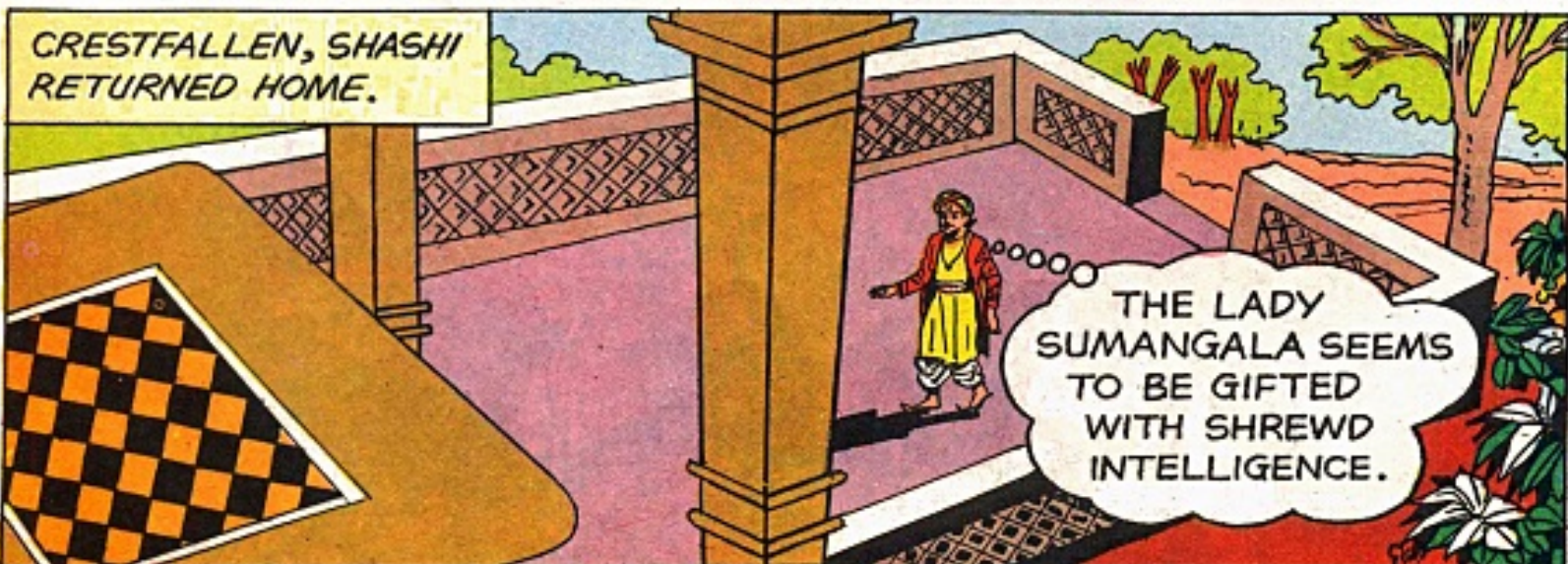
AT THE THIRD PORTAL HE WAS ASKED TO PARTAKE OF A DAINTY MEAL. THIS FURTHER DELAYED SHASHI, AND THE THIRD WATCH OF THE NIGHT HAD ALSO PASSED.



WHEN SHASHI ENTERED THE FOURTH AND FINAL DOOR THAT LED TO SUMANGALA'S PRIVATE APARTMENT, THE DOORKEEPER STOPPED HIM RUDELY.



CRESTFALLEN, SHASHI
RETURNED HOME.

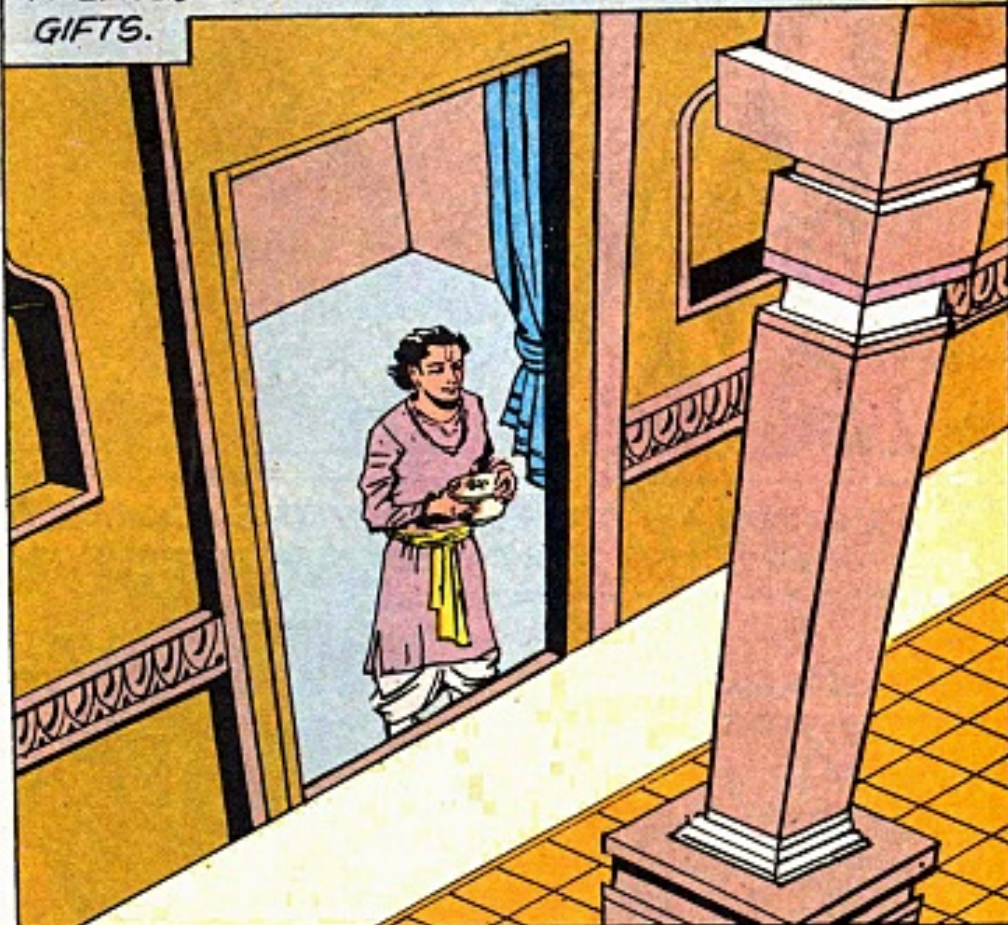


THE NEXT DAY SHASHI WENT TO MULADEVA AND RELATED THE INCIDENT.

OUTDONE BY A MERE DANCER! FRIEND, I SWEAR TO GET THE BETTER OF THIS WOMAN.



THAT NIGHT MULADEVA WENT TO SUMANGALA'S PALACE, CARRYING A NUMBER OF PRECIOUS GIFTS.

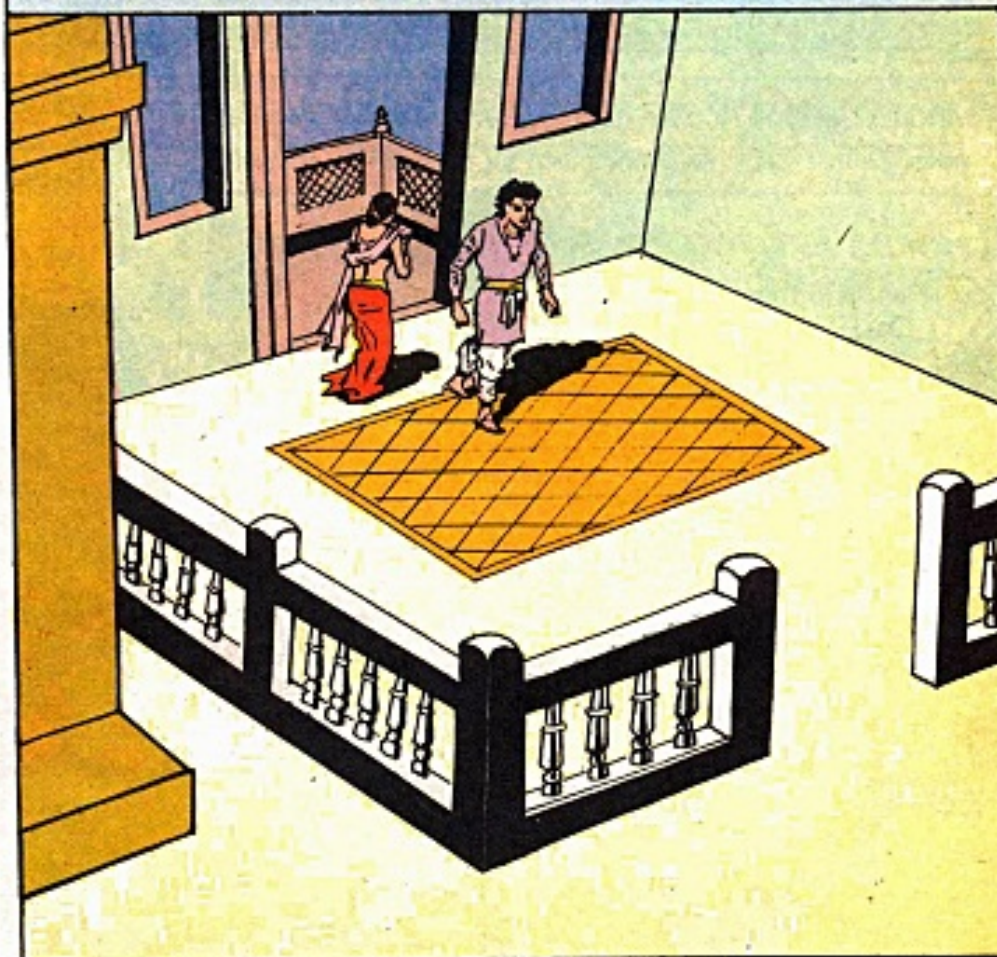


WHEN HE WAS STOPPED AT THE FIRST DOOR, HE BRIBED THE DOORKEEPER WITH A VALUABLE PIECE OF JEWELLERY.

A CASKET OF GOLD STUDED WITH PEARLS, ALL FOR YOU.



HE WAS SOON PERMITTED TO PASS THE DOOR.



IN THE SAME WAY HE GAINED ADMITTANCE
THROUGH THE OTHER DOORS.



AT SUMANGALA'S DOOR HE GAVE THE DOORKEEPER A NECKLACE
MADE OF BRILLIANT DIAMONDS.

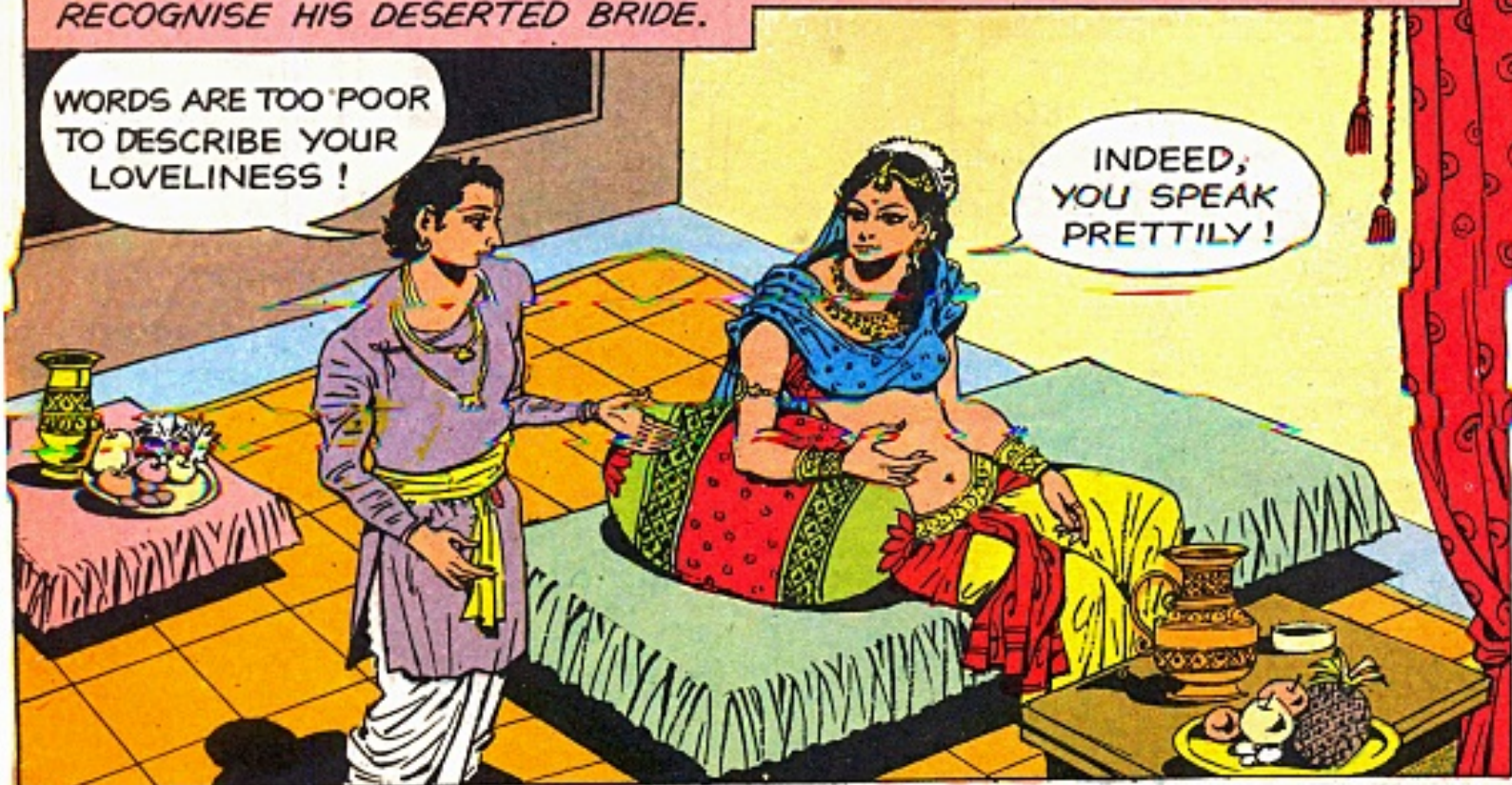
GIVE YOUR
MISTRESS THIS AND
SAY THAT MULADEVA
WAITS UPON HER.



MULADEVA WAS SOON IN THE PRESENCE OF SUMANGALA. HE DID NOT
RECOGNISE HIS DESERTED BRIDE.

WORDS ARE TOO POOR
TO DESCRIBE YOUR
LOVELINESS !

INDEED,
YOU SPEAK
PRETTILY !



SUMANGALA ENTERTAINED HIM ROYALLY.

NOW I HAVE
YOU IN MY POWER,
YOU LEARNED
FOOL!



YOU DANCE
EXCEEDINGLY WELL.
AND AS FOR YOUR
HOSPITALITY...

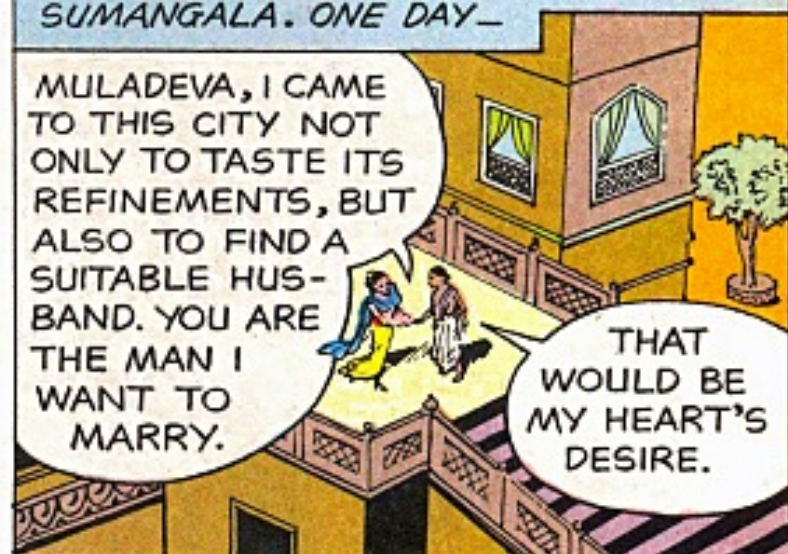
LEARNED SIR,
DO NOT OUR
SCRIPTURES
SAY THAT A GUEST
IS DIVINITY
ITSELF? DO
COME AGAIN.



MULADEVA PAID REGULAR VISITS TO
SUMANGALA. ONE DAY—

MULADEVA, I CAME
TO THIS CITY NOT
ONLY TO TASTE ITS
REFINEMENTS, BUT
ALSO TO FIND A
SUITABLE HUSBAND. YOU ARE
THE MAN I
WANT TO
MARRY.

THAT
WOULD BE
MY HEART'S
DESIRE.



SUMANGALA AND MULADEVA
WERE MARRIED AND HE
LIVED AT HER MANSION.
AFTER A FEW DAYS—

NOW I MUST
RETURN TO
PATALIPUTRA.



THE NEXT DAY...

I HAVE RECEIVED A LETTER FROM MY KING ORDERING ME TO RETURN IMMEDIATELY!

AND WHAT IS YOUR REPLY?

I MUST OBEY MY KING'S COMMAND. BUT WE WILL MEET SOON.

AND SUMANGALA LEFT UJJAINI.

SHE'S GONE — AND I AM BROKEN-HEARTED!

IN DUE COURSE SUMANGALA GAVE BIRTH TO A SON.

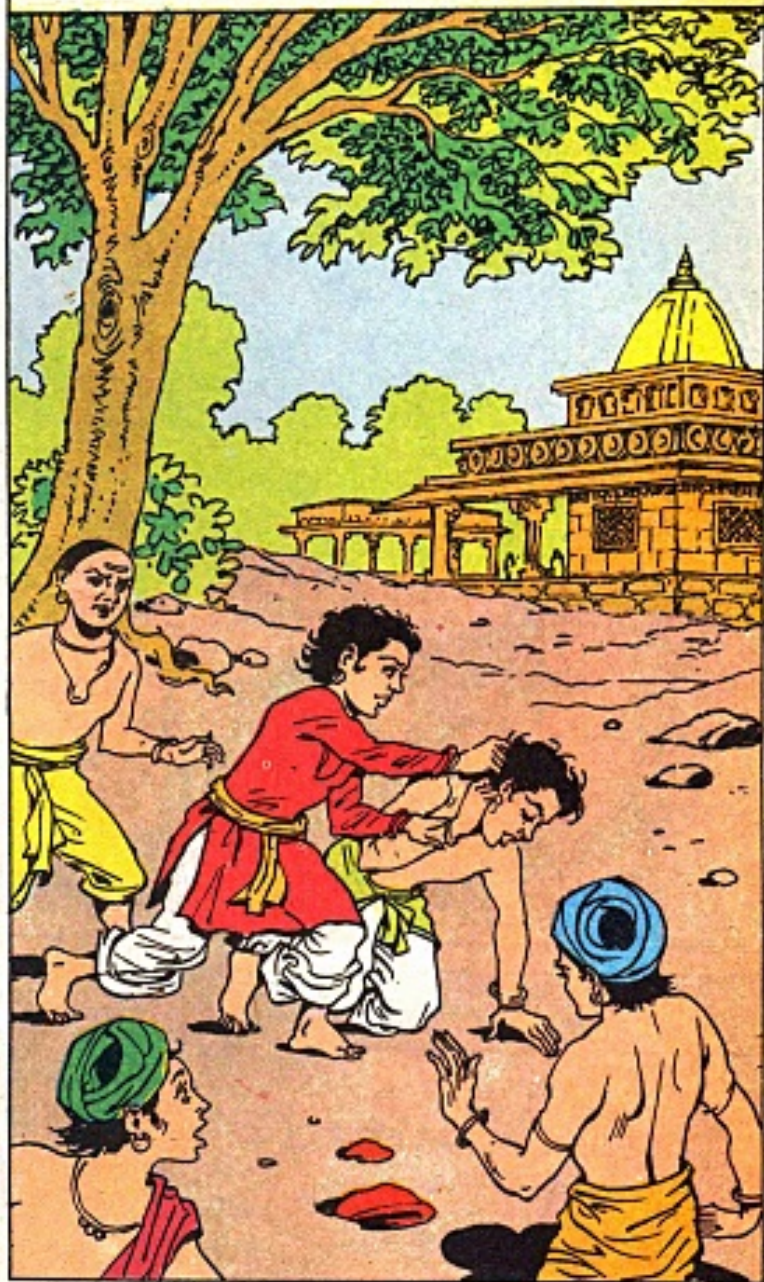
TWELVE YEARS PASSED BY. THE BOY GREW UP, INSTRUCTED IN MANY AN ACCOMPLISHMENT BY HIS MOTHER.

I AM GOING OUT TO PLAY, MOTHER.

BUT RETURN HOME SOON, SON!



WHILE AT PLAY, SUMANGALA'S SON HAD A FIGHT WITH THE OTHER BOYS.



WEAKLINGS!
CHILDREN OF
WEAKLINGS!

YES, YES,
SON OF A STRONG
FATHER. BUT DO
YOU KNOW WHO
YOUR FATHER
IS?



THAT DAY, THE BOY CAME HOME QUITE UPSET.

DID YOU FIGHT AGAIN?

MOTHER, WHO IS MY FATHER? AND WHERE IS HE?



LISTEN, SON. I'LL TELL YOU. YOUR FATHER'S NAME IS MULADEVA; HE DESERTED ME AND WENT AWAY TO UJJAINI.



SHE TOLD HIM HER TALE.

I WILL BRING BACK MY FATHER, A CAPTIVE.



SUMANGALA TOLD HER SON HOW TO IDENTIFY MULADEVA AND THE BOY SET OUT FOR UJJAINI.



HE REACHED UJJAINI AND WANDERED ABOUT TILL HE CAME TO A GAMBLING DEN.

DID YOU SEE MULADEVA? I HAVE WORK WITH HIM.

YES, HE JUST WENT IN.

ON HEARING MULADEVA'S NAME -

MULADEVA? THAT COULD BE MY FATHER! I'LL FOLLOW THAT MAN.

THE BOY ENTERED THE HALL AND SAW THE MAN HE HAD FOLLOWED SITTING WITH TWO PEOPLE, PLAYING DICE.

I'LL JOIN THEM AND SHOW THEM WHAT MY FINGERS CAN DO AT DICE!

HE JOINED THE OTHERS IN A GAME.

FOR YOUR AGE, YOU PLAY WELL, BOY!

IN NO TIME, THE BOY WON MONEY FROM EVERYONE.

YOU PLAY EXCEEDINGLY WELL! YOU PLAY LIKE A MAN!

THIS IS SMALL SPORT, SIR. I AM ADEPT IN MANY OTHER MATTERS!

THE BOY LEFT, GIVING AWAY THE MONEY TO THE BEGGARS SQUATTING OUTSIDE.

PRINCELY GENEROSITY TOO!

THAT NIGHT WHILE MULADEVA LAY ASLEEP...

...THE BOY ENTERED HIS CHAMBER STEALTHILY.

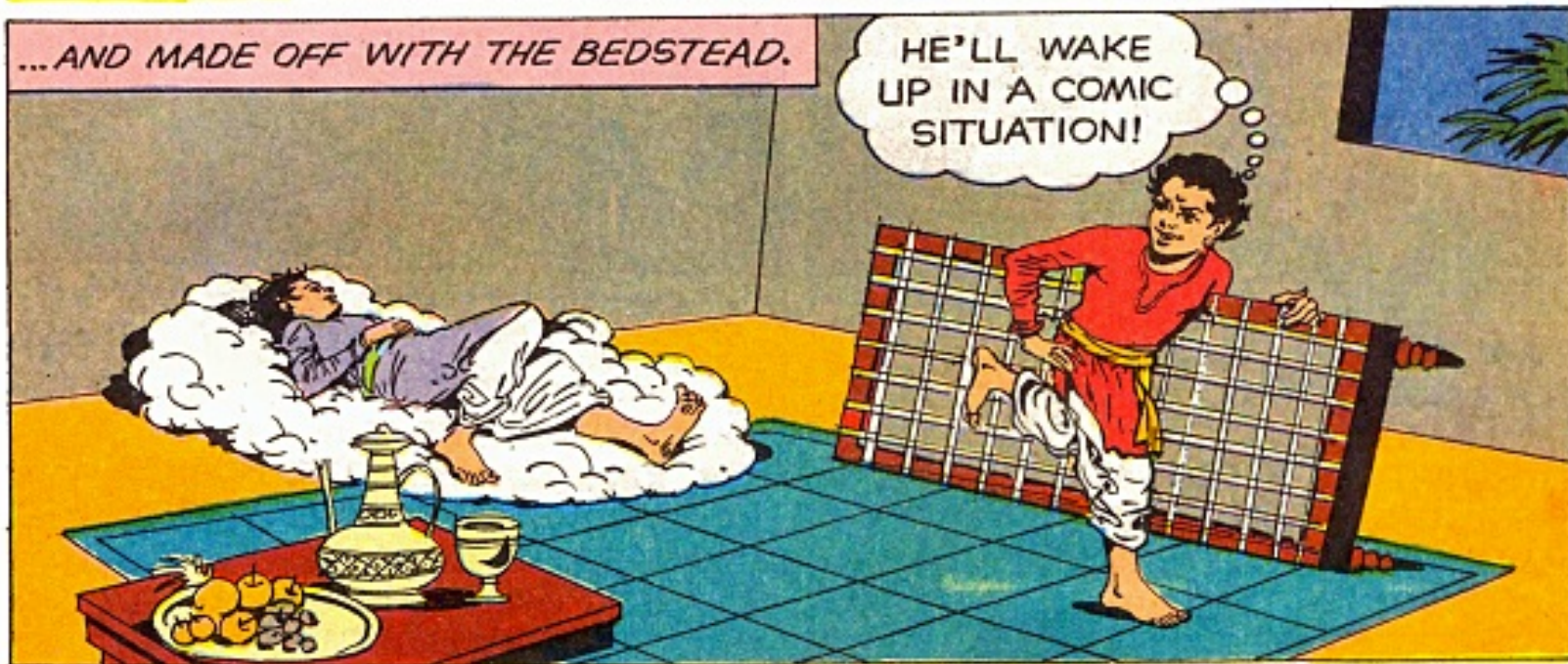
I MUST GENTLY PLACE HIM ON THE FLOOR AND CARRY OFF THE BEDSTEAD!

HE ARTFULLY PUT MULADEVA ON A HEAP OF SOFT COTTON...



...AND MADE OFF WITH THE BEDSTEAD.

HE'LL WAKE UP IN A COMIC SITUATION!



THE NEXT MORNING, MULADEVA AWOKE WITH MIXED FEELINGS OF SHOCK, AMUSEMENT AND SHAME.

SOMEBODY PULLS OFF MY BED FROM UNDERNEATH ME WHILE I REMAIN DEAD ASLEEP... ?!



THAT DAY, AS HE WAS PASSING THROUGH THE MARKET SQUARE, MULADEVA SAW THE BOY.

THAT IS THE VERY BOY WHO WON AT THE DICE GAME! NOW HE IS SELLING MY BED!

MULADEVA APPROACHED HIM.

WHAT IS THE PRICE OF THIS BEDSTEAD?

I WILL EXCHANGE IT FOR A STRANGE AND WONDERFUL TALE.

WELL, THEN, IF YOU CAN UNDERSTAND MY TALE AND SEE ITS TRUTH, THE BEDSTEAD IS YOURS. IF NOT, I KEEP IT.

THAT'S A BARGAIN!

MULADEVA SPUN HIS TALE.

FAMINE STALKED THE LAND. THE KING COVERED THE BOAR'S BELOVED WITH SHOWERS OF SPRAY FROM CHARIOTS OF SNAKES. WITH THE GRAIN THUS PRODUCED, THE KING PUT AN END TO THE FAMINE.

THE BOY SMILED KNOWINGLY.

THE CHARIOTS OF SNAKES ARE CLOUDS; THE BELOVED OF THE BOAR IS THE EARTH, FOR SHE WAS MOST DEAR TO THE GOD VISHNU IN HIS BOAR INCARNATION; SO ALL YOU ARE SAYING IS THAT THE RAIN FROM THE CLOUDS MADE GRAIN SPRING UP ON THE EARTH!

MULADEVA WAS DUMBFOUNDED AT THE YOUNG BOY'S QUICK GRASP OF FACTS.

NOW HERE'S A STRANGE TALE. IF YOU UNDERSTAND IT AND SEE ITS TRUTH, THE BED-STEAD IS YOURS. ELSE, YOU SHALL BE MY SERVANT.

I AGREE.

LONG AGO ON THIS EARTH WAS BORN A WONDERFUL BOY. AS SOON AS HE WAS BORN HE MADE THE EARTH TREMBLE WITH HIS WEIGHT. WHEN HE GREW BIGGER HE STEPPED INTO ANOTHER WORLD!

MULADEVA COULD NOT FATHOM THE RIDDLE.

A FALSE STORY, INDEED.

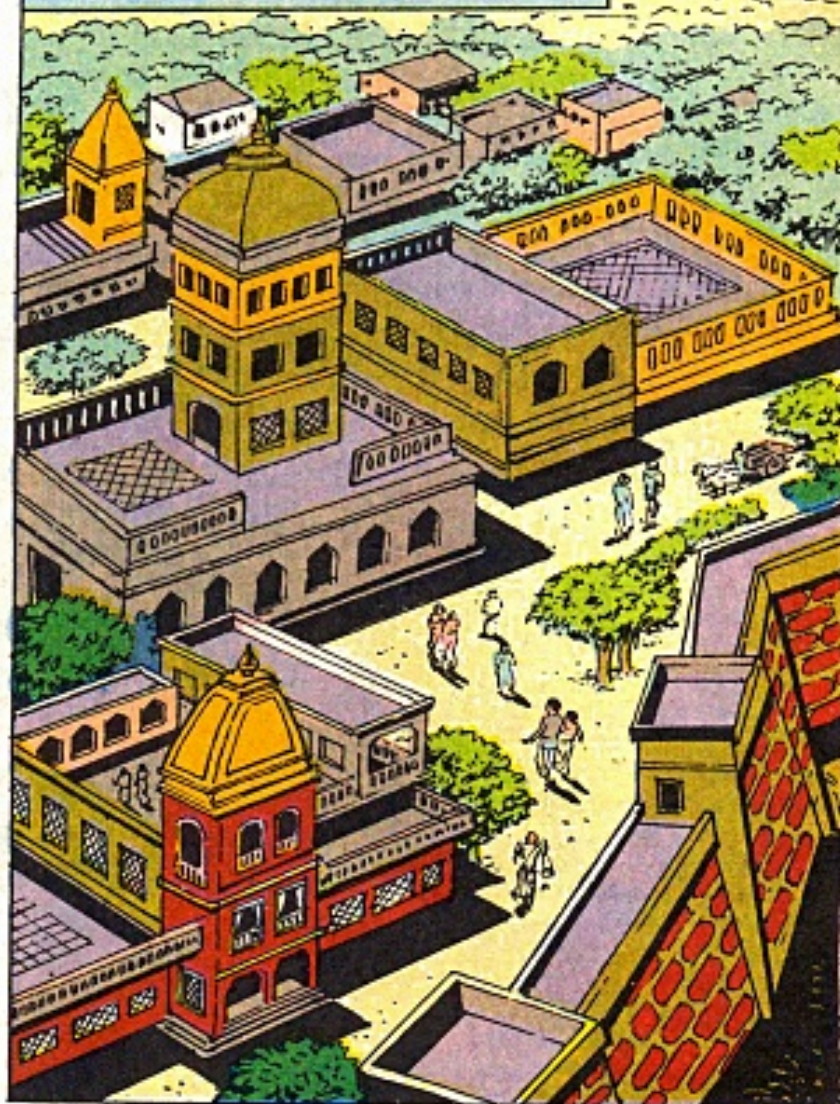
O LEARNED IN THE SCRIPTURES, DID NOT THE GOD VISHNU, WHEN HE TOOK BIRTH AS A DWARF, MAKE THE EARTH TREMBLE, THEN GROW BIGGER AND STEP INTO HEAVEN?

MULADEVA FELT HUMBLLED.

SIR, YOU HAVE BEEN DEFEATED BY ME. OWN UP AND BE MY SERVANT, ACCOMPANYING ME WHEREVER I GO.



BOUND BY HIS PROMISE, MULADEVA FOLLOWED HIM AND SOON FOUND HIMSELF IN PATALIPUTRA.



THE BOY LED MULADEVA STRAIGHT TO HIS MOTHER.

WHAT ! SUMANGALA?

YES, BUT ALSO YOUR DESERTED WIFE. TODAY AS I HAD VOWED, YOU HAVE BEEN BROUGHT HERE BY OUR SON.



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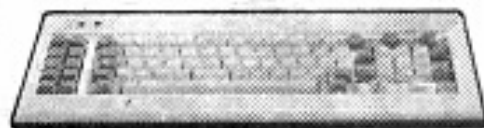
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